

for 11 hours Gary Powers
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Shh! Not A Word!

In the Never-Never Land of Washington, D.C., where one is sometimes tempted to think that only the cherry blossoms are for real, the Central Intelligence Agency is apparently up to its old tricks.

From the usually reliable New York Herald Tribune comes the report that U2 pilot Francis Gary Powers, whose crash within the Soviet Union five years ago almost precipitated armed conflict between the United States and Russia, has been secretly decorated by the CIA for his part in that stormy episode.

But it's a medal he can't wear. It's a medal he can't admit receiving. We can only hope that he, at least, is allowed to keep it in his own safe déposit box.

For a man who took on an extremely dangerous job, came within a hair of losing his life, served in a Russian prison and was castigated by both the pacifists ("a tool of the war-mongers") and the

sword rattling militarists ("he should have destroyed himself to preserve the national honor"), a medal that he can't even admit receiving is pretty poor compensation.

The least that Gary Powers should expect to get from the government is public recognition of the fact that he did his job as ordered and that he did it well enough, apparently, to warrant the CIA's gratitude. To continue wrapping him in this James Bond-ish cloak of mystery is to give credence, indefinitely, to 1960 rumors that there was something less than admirable in Powers' handling of his tricky job and in his trial remarks.

The world is a lot more sophisticated today about counter intelligence on both sides of the Iron Curtain, and there can hardly be any valid reason for this hush-hush handling of a man who obviously deserves public, as well as inter-departmental, acclaim.